

Lexington Housing Policy and Zoning

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The Problem

Lexington needs a diverse stock of housing to serve local and regional housing needs. This need is severe and immediate.

Our current zoning is a major reason for our lack of diversity.

- The one type of housing of which we are building more than enough (very large single-family dwellings on large lots) is made very easy to build by our current zoning (by right, no site plan review, minimal stormwater regulations, highly profitable).
- All other types of housing (small dwellings on small lots; two-family and multifamily dwellings (both large and small); mixed use developments; specialized senior housing, such as Independent Living Facilities (ILFs such as Waterstone), Assisted Living Facilities (ALFs such as Youville), and Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs such as Brookhaven); and affordable housing are made either very difficult or uneconomic to build by zoning requirements.

Goals for New Zoning

Our zoning should result in the production of a significant amount of diverse housing across multiple dimensions to meet a wide variety of needs.

- Affordability: From low-income (~\$200,000) through the cost of existing homes (~\$1,000,000)
- Size: From studio units for young adults, through 3+ bedroom units for families, plus 1-2 bedroom units for empty-nesters
- Type: Single-family, two-family, small and large multifamily, mixed use, and senior housing (55+, ILF, ALF, CCRC)

Smaller two-family and multifamily projects should be by-right (with site plan review for larger projects). Only the largest projects should require a special permit. Planned development districts should be reserved for unique projects beyond the scope of known needs.

Housing across all dimensions must be made economically attractive to build. Limits on size, density, type, etc., and permitting requirements need to be calibrated so that one type or size is not consistently more attractive to builders.

New zoning restrictions that apply to existing housing should be sensitive to the negative impact of making it nonconforming.

These policies should be pursued town-wide, but some types of housing, such as mixed use or very large multifamily, will be more appropriate in areas better-served by transportation options, such as along arterial roads or near commercial centers.

References

- <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2019/07/oregon-single-family-zoning-reform-yimby-affordable-housing/593137/>
- <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2018/12/mayor-minneapolis-2040-affordable-housing-single-family-zoning/577657/>